S A C R E D
D A N C E
G U I L D
N E W S L E T T E R
M A Y 1958

Avis-Ann Parke, Editor
21 Pine Street
Peterborough, New Hampshire

EDITOR'S NOTE: A collection of choreographic material is being compiled for circulation on request to our members. We encourage all directors to record in stick-figures or by other ingeniously simple devices, their interpretations, and to please put in a carbon for us to use for the benefit of all. Some interested persons are inquiring as to how to start a choir. Let's have a forum from you on "how we did it," problems encountered, exercises used, pieces interpreted, useful items to new groups; i.e. gowns, types of services, and publicity.

TED SHAWN says, "The duty of the artist is to shed light into the darkness of men's souls. Feel always that a charge is laid upon you--to send your audience away uplifted, joyous, stimulated to create, given courage to face burdens gaily. And you cannot express in movement anything greater or finer than you yourself are. First BE and then DO. Say, when you dance, with Zarathustra: 'Now there danceth a god in me.'"

DANCE MAGAZINE, in June, 1957, published a symposium, "The Dance: What It Means to Me." The statements of fifteen notable persons, not in the dance profession, contain some interesting observations. Noteworthy of the replies were those of two theologians, Paul Tillich (Professor, Harvard Divinity School), and Moshe Davis (Professor and Director, Jewish Theological Seminary of America). Professor Tillich said, "The word Dance evokes in me the memory of the middle twenties in Dresden. At that time, Dresden was rightly called the 'capital of the dance.' I happened to be professor at the Technical Academy, teaching philosophy of religion, and I was connected with the school of Mary Wigman, who was then and still is acknowledged

(Continued on next page)

*

MOTION CHOIR PURPOSES

1. To unite teenage girls in a religious atmosphere for experiences of togetherness and belonging--to each other and to that Infinite Beauty and Wisdom outside of themselves.
2. To develop an awareness of themselves, their potentialities, in their inner feelings (joy, anger, frustration, peace, contentment), in their bodies a sense of control, grace and freedom (by using only a finger for expression, or their total being as a "unity of influence"), the space directly around them and their imaginations for 'outer space', their concepts of reality, history, and prophesy.
3. To provide a medium and atmosphere for exploring: the use and meaning of their bodies (physically and emotionally), their creative imagination (in coordinating their ideas with action), their spirits (in comprehending the Divine Presence and enhancing true religious experience), interpersonal relationships (cooperation, coordination and comprehension).
4. To discover the joy of service (in helping others to understand, to be as a minister the vehicle of Infinite Love, to give others pleasure and meaning in the worship experience--to bring light where there is darkness).
5. To provide a wealth of experience and knowledge for mature adulthood.

HAVE YOU SEEN.....?

"Basic Dance on a College Level" and "Creative Dance for Children", Mettler Studios, 242 Newbury St., Boston, Mass.

Film - "Rites" - Pearl Lang Co.

International Journals of Religion--

2/52-Religious expression through rhythm
2/53-Spiritual therapy through rhythm
10/54-Experiments on TV
11/55-Interpreting Bible passages

"LET OUR DOCTRINES AND OUR FORMS FIT THE SOUL, AS THE LIMBS FIT THE BODY--GROWING OUT OF IT, GROWING WITH IT. LET US HAVE A CHURCH FOR THE WHOLE MAN"

Theodore Parker

TILLICH (Cont'd)
as one of the foremost creators of modern expressive dance.

"The expressive power of the moving body, the organization of space by dancers (individuals and groups), the rhythms embodied in visible movements, the accompanying sounds expressing the idea and the passion behind the dance: all this became philosophically and religiously significant for me. It was a new encounter with reality in its deeper levels. In unity with the great German expressionists painters, whose works and whom one frequently encountered in Dresden at the time, it inspired my understanding of religion as the spiritual substance of culture and of culture as the expressive form of religion. It also raised in me the unanswered question of how the lost unity could be regained between cult and dance on the hard and unreceptive soil of Protestantism.

"The emphasis on the expressive dance does not exclude a full and happy affirmation of the primitive social dances. They are a combination of vitality and form, the criticism of which as being evil in themselves is rooted in the same depreciation of the body with its expressive and creative powers which has cut the primordial die between religion and dance."

DR. DAVIS said, "The dance is an opportunity given each of us to set the gift of the body into harmony with the gift of the mind and the heart. Judaism teaches that every man is a universe, a complete and whole world, composed of a body and soul. The body and the spirit it guards and supports are indivisible. Man sustains this union only by proper modulation of his body, mind and heart. This is the view of man which I was taught: that life co-relates the function of the body with the function of the spirit. And yet, until the editor of Dance magazine put the question directly - what does the dance mean to me - I had not realized I dance at least three times a day - at morning, afternoon and evening prayers. I was brought up in a mode of worship in which movement is a part of the act of prayer, and I find that I pray with greater intensity when my prayer is accompanied by an informal rhythmic pattern. Dance, to me, is not essentially a performance to watch, but a form of personal expression.

"This is an ancient Jewish tradition. The Babylonian Talmud records that when Rabbi Akiba prayed alone, one would leave him at the beginning of his prayers in one

DAVIS (Cont'd)
corner and find him later in another corner, because of his many bendings and movements. But the most popular Biblical citation upon which is based this concept of the function of dance in religious expression, is the verse in Psalms 35:10 'All my bones shall say: "Lord, who is like unto thee"...' (the force of the Hebrew word etzem carries not only the literal meaning, bone, but also self.) A later Midrash which comments on this verse teaches that 'there is no part of the body which the righteous do not use when they praise the Lord.'

"This tradition intends to induce an individual creativity in which movement and bodily expression build an edifice of being and group living. The Hassidic groups in East-European Jewry were the great exponents of this view. In more recent years, the rapid strides of the folk-dance movement in Israel were largely due to the immediate tradition of Hassidic life, evolving in an entirely different milieu.

"Jewish religious leaders and educators in America are keenly aware of the role of dance education in unfolding the personality and helping the individual to discover his relationship to God and the world he lives in. Under the impact of Western civilization, individual personality is often imprisoned by external forces. In America, someone once said, we insist on our right to be different so that we can all be alike. This has occurred in religious life, too, in the area where personal expression should be supreme. Individualized chanting in prayer has been sublimated into uniform congregational singing and personalized movement has been inhibited by the demand of group decorum and 'solidity.'

"Happily, the movement to make the dance a basic part of the Jewish educational scheme is gaining an increasing number of adherents. Virtually all Jewish religious schools have introduced the dance as an extra-curricular subject.

"I look forward to the day when it will be part of the curriculum of life to learn how to take the long step back into ourselves, so that we will feel free to dance as we feel free to walk."

SUGGESTIONS FOR INTERPRETATIONS
"The Creation"-James Weldon Johnson
"I Feel Like a Motherless Child"-
arr. Fred Waring
"Dear Lord and Father of Mankind"-
Hymns of the Spirit
"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

MORNING WORKSHOPS - SACRED DANCE GUILD, February 10, 1958

The first workshop was begun by Mrs. Ruby Henderson, a settlement worker at Shaw House, Boston, who read a lovely poem. The poem told of the different thoughts and emotions several people had, upon seeing a beautiful tree; the idler, the lumberman, the farmer, the minister, the geologist, and the poet. With this in mind, it is good for us all to get together to enjoy the different approaches that we have to the same art. She then introduced her teacher, Miss Barbara Mettler, of the Mettler School of the Modern Dance.

Miss Mettler told us that creative dance is an experience; a creative activity of primary importance to the dancer who is creating the dance, and secondly, to the one who sees it. It is free, natural movement expression, and each dancer finds his own forms. He can make it new each time, if it is an expression of himself. We all express ourselves every moment in movement of varying types, and not one of us but what can have a creative experience, if we feel free to create, and are unafraid. Miss Mettler then directed us in some very interesting and helpful creative dance work, which we all felt was most instructive and useful.

Beatrice Jenkins then told of her work at Ferry Beach, the summer institute of the Universalist Church. She explained how working with older women who had never done any creative dance work was a challenge and the teacher learns to see beauty and grace where sometimes it had been overlooked. Pictures were shown of some of her groups, and also beautiful slides brought by other Guild members.

At lunch, we listened to the record of the "Speak Four Trio" of Baylor University, a collection of Bible readings for which Juana de Laban has designed movement. Then followed general discussion and an interchanging of ideas until the annual meeting was called.

The annual meeting of the Eastern Regional Sacred Dance Association was held Feb. 10, 1958, at the Unitarian Church in Winchester. The meeting was called to order at 2:05 by the chairman, Jane Renz.

Mrs. Renz read letters from Mary Jane Wolbers regarding an article which appeared in the November Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation; also one from Jean Miller in which dates for the three-day workshop on June 23, 24, and 25 with Mr. Shawn at Jacob's Pillow were given. The fee of $30 includes room and board and instruction.

MINUTES (Cont'd)

The treasurer's report was read and approved, a balance of $87.32 being reported, exclusive of the day's receipts. The new by-laws were read and discussed at length, much time being spent on the question of a suitable name for our organization. It was voted that the name of the organization shall be--The Sacred Dance Guild. After a few minor changes, a vote was taken, and the by-laws were accepted, and copies will be given to the members. The nominating committee presented the slate of officers:

President--Jane Renz
1st Vice Pres.--Avis-Ann Parke
Treasurer--Josephine Rice
Recording Sec'y--Beatrice Jenkins
Corresponding Sec'y--Thelma Atwood
National Publicity--Mary Jane Wolbers
Regional, for Mass. and R.I.--Eltress Mitchell
for Conn.--Helen Gray
Membership--Helen Borngesser
Directors--Hazel Bailey
Dorothy Creed
Ruby Henderson

The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beatrice C. Jenkins

ANOTHER QUOTE FROM "DANCE"

Jane Gunther (journalist and wife of John Gunther) says, "...dancing ...involves the whole of a person, which is possibly why it is so mesmerizing to watch. You lose your identity in the dancer. Other arts demand only a part of the artist, but the dance involves the entire body, controlled from the center of the being, and not even a nerve in the little finger can be left out. A really fine dancer gives his entire intelligence to the point and essence of each dance, and his concentration holds yours. A pianist uses his hands, arms, feet, mind and soul, but a dancer uses every single bit of his body and being. It must be very satisfying."

ERIKA THIMEY says, "Since in our dance the body is the instrument of the soul, I have sought to create a new form of worship through the art of the body in motion. It is my intention that this worship be not merely for the personal gratification of the performer, but that it serve mankind by bringing a sincere religious experience to the congregations that behold it".

"Know ye not that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, glorify, therefore, God in your bodies and your spirits which are God's." I Corinthians 6:19, 20